

Grayson
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
July 2025

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Grayson
Comprehensive Plan
Update

County Agricultural Development Councils have the responsibility to evaluate the needs of the local agricultural economy. The updated County Comprehensive Plan should identify programs and projects best suited for agricultural development fund investments in the County.

The Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy staff may provide guidance to county councils throughout this evaluation.

1. Overview of County

Grayson County has a diversified agricultural industry producing corn, wheat, soybeans, tobacco, hay, livestock, dairy, and poultry. The number of farms has decreased slightly from 1339 in 2017 vs. 2089, a change of 11%. Farm land in the county has gone from 212,343 in 2020 to 232,159 In 2022, a gain of about 31,000 acres.

Acres devoted to grain production have increased partially due to higher grain prices from 2020-2024. We are anticipating a decrease due to the current market trends. . The trend in hay production is positive for the county for the same period as livestock requirements increase due to historically high beef prices from 2023-2025This is consistent

a. Agricultural statistics, trends, & projections (i.e. USDA Census and Survey Data)

a. Traditional agricultural production

- i. Poultry production is the highest producing commodity in the county. It has over doubled from 2012 to 2025 with almost 21 million in cash receipts. There continues to be emphasis on helping make adjustments to housing, ventilation, and sustainability. Cattle are very important to the county, contributing over 19 million in cash receipts for 2022. Dairy production went from has decreased from 9 herds in 2017 down to, to 2 based on 2022 Census data. .

b. Non-traditional agricultural production

- i. Sheep and goat production continue to be prevalent in Grayson County, with many smaller producers opting to raise small animals over large. There has also been some growth in small scale pork production, averaging about 400 animals sold.

c. New & emerging agricultural production

- i. Small ruminant, specialty crop, floral production, and bee production is increasing. Producers are taking advantage of consumer popularity of

these areas and are utilizing programs to get funding they need to succeed.

d. Tobacco dependency

- i. There are less than 3 farms dependent on tobacco, down from 50 in 2020.

b. Demographic and Economic Data

a. Social data

The 2020 estimated population of Grayson County is, 26,631 an increase of around 3% people since 2010.

The population of Leitchfield, the county seat, is 6,463, Clarkson is 953, and Caneyville is 530, which leaves the bulk of the population, 18,865, in the county.

"In 2023, Grayson County, KY had a population of 26.6k people with a median age of 40.3 and a median household income of \$49,893. Between 2022 and 2023 the population of Grayson County, KY grew from 26,465 to 26,586, a 0.457% increase and its median household income grew from \$47,024 to \$49,893, a 6.1% increase.

The 5 largest ethnic groups in Grayson County, KY are White (Non-Hispanic) (94.8%), Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (1.99%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (0.993%), White (Hispanic) (0.982%), and Asian (Non-Hispanic) (0.361%).

None of the households in Grayson County, KY reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multi-lingual nature of households, but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household.

99.5% of the residents in Grayson County, KY are U.S. citizens in 2023, the median property value in Grayson County, KY was \$160,100, and the homeownership rate was 76.2%.

Most people in Grayson County, KY drove alone to work, and the average commute time was 25.6 minutes. The average car ownership in Grayson County, KY was 2 cars per household."

Direct source: <https://Datausa.io/profile/geo/grayson-county-ky>

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Grayson County's greatest strength lies in its diversification. We have a large forage base, good water supply, and interstate access. This provides ample opportunity for livestock, dairy, poultry and horticulture production.

The county has over 150,000 acres of timberland, which gives us the opportunity to increase value-added activities.

Our county is scenic with a proximity to numerous tourist attractions as well as easy access to the ever-increasing industrial workforce in neighboring Hardin County.

We have a lessening dependence on farm income due to the off farm job opportunities that supplement small scale farming operations.

b. Weaknesses

Weaknesses for our farming community are caused in part by the success of non-farming businesses. Leitchfield, the county seat, has attracted a number of small factories, which has provided jobs and income for the county's workforce. Retirees moving in have increased the cost of farm land and hampered agricultural output through restrictions concerning waste disposal, use of herbicides, and the proximity of livestock to non-farm families. We are not blessed with large amounts of Class A farm land with nearly half of the county in woodlands. Lack of adequate markets within the county require agriculture production to be transported outside the county for value-added processing. The county also has very limited access to farm and livestock supplies. Another weakness is the lack of markets for produce and commodities. If not selling direct, there is often times many miles traveled to sell and market items.

The county's soil has a low fertility basis with a fragipan that is close to rock and highly erodible. In addition, we have a large number of watersheds, which create water-quality problems.

c. Opportunities

We have the opportunity to increase our agri-tourism, especially with the current diversified agriculture enterprises we have. We have tremendous potential to increase our farm market footprint, where the lakes bring tourists and new clientele. Small animal and horticulture enterprises could be greatly expanded in the near future. Because of the large woodland base, we also have tremendous potential to increase our income from timber and wood products. Large forage acreage provides opportunities to generate additional marketing of livestock and cash sales of forages.

d. Challenges

The agricultural economy is in a very serious transition going from high grain prices and high input costs to low grain prices but with input costs remaining high. Profitability in this current trade and economic climate is not positive. Current farm operations are more likely to see profits in the slim to none category. Nearby acreage necessary for expansion, which would improve profitability is unavailable. Most land sales are being broken into mini-farms or being used as residential sites and small hobby farms. The capital requirement for expansion to a profitable full-time operation is very discouraging for those who want to remain in full-time farm operations. It is difficult to foresee many seeking expansion to a profitable full-time operation. Young farmers are finding it difficult to become established due to the enormous initial capital investment. The average age of producer is also a growing concern, with younger generations having little to do with farming, or not having enough capital to purchase farmland. Another challenge is finding and providing resources for those family farms who want to transition the farming operation into the next generation, while lessening their tax burden.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Grayson County Agricultural Development Council is to promote and support activities that will generate income to replace tobacco profits. It is our goal to increase the value of Grayson County agricultural production by supporting innovative ideas in existing farming activities and development of new enterprises. By encouraging better utilization of our resources in current farm activities and assisting entrepreneurial ventures, we hope to provide profitable examples for the county's farming community.

b. Short term goals

Our top priority for increasing income in the near future is in improving the practices in those areas that currently dominate our farming enterprises. Nearly two thirds of our county's farm income is from livestock. Because we are substantial producers of meat and milk, we hope to enhance the value and volume of these commodities.

One way of increasing the value of our beef and milk animals is using improved genetics, and defined breeding seasons. This would be accomplished by cost sharing in the purchase of superior bulls, semen, and items related to DNA testing, and Artificial Insemination. A second step in investing in resources to help producers with improving ventilation systems, heavy use areas, and emerging technology. Forages is another area of priority. Improving the quality and quantity of our forages by

incentivizing new and emerging varieties, equipment use, and other emerging technologies. Better utilization of forages would be accomplished by cost sharing in practices involving water systems, rotational grazing, hay storage facilities, and production equipment.

c. Long term goals

Adaptation of successful practices will be encouraged and expanded while unsuccessful activities will be abandoned.

Funds from the State Agricultural Development Board earmarked for Grayson County will be extended through the use of CAIP and regional or cross-county partnerships that are attractive to the county's farmers.

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to request funds from the State Agricultural Development Board and look for additional monies from the local, state, and federal agencies whenever possible. Participants will also be encouraged to utilize information provided by state research groups as to the feasibility of various projects.

c. Tactics for leveraging funds

a. Regional partnerships

Funds from the State Agricultural Development Board earmarked for Grayson County will be extended through the use of cost share practices and regional or cross-county partnerships that are attractive to the county's farmers.

b. State Agricultural Development Board resources

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to request funds from the State Agricultural Development Board and/or Kentucky Ag Finance program. Participants will also be encouraged to utilize information provided by state research groups as to the feasibility of various projects.

c. Other local/state/federal resources

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to look for additional monies from the local, state, and federal agencies whenever possible. USDA microloans are one option.

3. Evaluation & Review

a. How are proposals evaluated and does this process need modified?

Requests for county funds are evaluated based on funds available and impact to county. No modifications seem necessary at this time.

b. How is success and failure measured?

Most county funds are used to fund the CAIP program. The success of this program can be measured by the improvement to county farms as well as the amount of funds producers are inputting over and above their amount of cost share. Any remaining money we have will be used for special project applications that are submitted. These will be approved or not approved based on the council's ideals on how it will benefit the agriculture and horticulture community of Grayson County.

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

The county comprehensive plan will be reviewed as necessary with a minimum of every five years.